

The Collector's Encyclopedia of Shells by S. Peter Dance, 1974, 288 pp., 2 text figures, 1 map, > 1500 coloured figures. First Australian edition, 1977; Australian & New Zealand Book Company Pty. Ltd.: Sydney. (ISBN 0-8552-071-X). Australian price \$17.95 (Copy supplied by: ANZ Book Co. Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 459, Brookvale, N.S.W. 2100).

"The ever-growing interest in shell collecting in recent years has resulted in a spate of books popularising the subject, and the publication of yet another may seem superfluous." These introductory words from the preamble do sum up the situation. One cannot accept however that this particular book is superfluous. It is 288 pages of first class production – excellent text and superb illustrations.

The book encompasses only marine species of the world, with by far the greater part (194 pp.) devoted to the Gastropoda. The Bivalvia (53 pp.) are well represented, and the more specialized groups of Amphineura, Scaphopoda and Cephalopoda are more or less mentioned only in passing with 1½ pages each. The Introduction (7 pp.) concisely presents a wealth of essential information for the beginner and more advanced collector, covering briefly aspects of taxonomy, biology, growth, shell structure, form and ornament, colour and pattern, feeding, locomotion, and habitat, together with sections on collecting, preparation and storage, identification, distribution (with an easily understood map), and shell collecting past and present.

A great deal of care has been exercised in selecting the specimens photographed, and the camera work is of the same high standard throughout. Only one specimen appears to this reviewer to be of not choicest quality, that of the much sought-after *Conus gloriamaris*. Catering for the general collector, and no doubt with sales in mind, popular groups such as cowries (83 spp.), muricids (80 spp.) and cones (84 spp.) have a large coverage. Other attractive groups are well represented, cymatiids, mitres, volutes, larger marginellids, scallops and venerids each having more than 30 illustrations. Many other species are mentioned in the text, and are compared with species that are illustrated.

There are, as in every like book, problems of being out of date even before the very time of publication. In the five years from compilation to this Australian edition, a number of systematic revisions have appeared, each necessitating a number of taxonomic changes. The result of one such revision, for example, means that in the genus *Penion* (pp. 140-1), entries should be altered to read: for *grandis* Gray and *oligostira* Tate read *mandarinus* Ducloux; for *mandarinus* Ducloux read *sulcatus* Lamarck.

No doubt there are taxa in the book that need to be changed for other reasons. For instance, Australian malacologists regard the chiton on p.26 as as the subspecies *Ischnochiton elongatus crispus* and its distribution as New South Wales and far-eastern Victoria. They would prefer to call the *Turbo* on p.51 by the earlier taxon *gruneri* Philippi. They would recognize also *Guildfordia triumphans* (p.50) as occurring in north-eastern Australian seas. And the list would run on, and on, as the specialists each add information for a particular region.

But no matter what complaints and objections may be raised regarding the book, there can be no doubts that it is a visually delightful reference to use. This Australian edition of Peter Dance's *The Collector's Encyclopedia of Shells* is very highly recommended to all shell collectors from beginners to specialists.

Robert Burn